

# Lake budget approved

**John Arthur Hutchison**

JHutchison@News-Herald.com

Twitter: @newshealdjah

Lake County commissioners unanimously approved a \$58,551,886 million budget Wednesday for 2012 that is \$3.72 million higher than last year's

spending plan.

Commissioners said the budget would allow the county to stop the bleeding in terms of further cuts to departments as the budget had continued to shrink for many of the previous years.

The estimated revenue for the gen-

eral fund in 2012 is \$58,924,650 and the carryover balance heading into the year was \$2.7 million, said county Budget Director Joel DiMare.

Commissioner Daniel P. Troy said the anticipated revenue level is similar to what the county received in 2005.

State law gives counties until April 1 each year to approve a permanent budget, and Lake County had operated under a \$13.51 million temporary budget approved in December. The permanent budget supersedes the temporary one.

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**It's official**

Lake County commissioners approve the 2012 budget.



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## Budget

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Commissioners said their plan includes the 0.5 percent increase in the county's sales tax rate that takes effect April 1. However, there is a lag of three months before the county receives sales revenues from the state.

The other part of the commissioners' sales tax plan is scheduled to take place next year and consists of a 1.1-mill reduction in property taxes

and \$1 million reduction in stormwater fees collected from property owners in communities that participate in the county's Stormwater Management Department.

Commissioners also said their budget includes \$1.5 million set aside for badly needed repairs and upgrades to the buildings that the county owns.

"We really have to address the long-term capital expenditures of those facilities," Troy said. "These are facilities that are owned by the taxpayers and

the commissioners are the stewards of these possessions."

Passage of the budget will stabilize current county operations without adding more staff. That includes the county jail and juvenile detention center that would have faced a reduction in operations or would have been closed without the additional revenue, he said.

"It does not regrow the county to what it had seen in previous years," Troy said. "It allows us to preform our statutory functions for the remain-

der of 2012 and to do that with a little more stability than in previous years."

Commissioner Robert E. Aufuldish said the temporary budget had a \$3 million to \$4 million hole in it, so the increased revenue will allow the county to run smoother.

"We would (have been) looking at losing more than 100 jobs and shutting down facilities and making us a part-time county," Aufuldish said.

Commissioner Raymond E. Sines said the county has lost

many sources of revenue, including investment earnings that now total about \$1 million down from \$8 million to \$9 million just a few years ago.

"I think it's important for people to realize that we aren't spending because we raised the sales tax, what we're doing is maintaining and that's what this budget does," Sines said.

Troy said the county is poised to lose additional revenue as there will be further reductions from the state's

Local Government Fund and reimbursement revenue streams caused by the state phasing out tangible personal property taxes and the deregulation of utilities.

The county this year will also conduct a state-required update on property values and officials anticipate another drop in valuations, Troy said.

Officials have said that drop in property valuations could be around 10 percent, a similar percentage drop as to the one that occurred three years ago.